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ABSTRACT

This document attempts to clarify the issues surrounding the assessment of English language learners (ELLs) for school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members in school districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools. These school districts enroll more than 30% of all ELLs in the United States. The report is the result of meetings of the bilingual education directors of the Council and the organization's Task Force on Bilingual Immigrant and Refugee Education. The document serves as a reference to the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act that pertain to the assessment of ELLs. It provides profiles of available English language proficiency assessments, and provides information on native language assessment and accommodations available for ELLs taking the academic achievement tests in English. The report also summarizes current concerns about the validity and reliability of current ELL assessments. Recommendations are made for test developers, teachers, researchers, policymakers, state education agencies, and local education agencies. An appendix describes the Council of the Great City Schools. (Contains 3 tables and 10 references.) (SLD)

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Assessing English Language Learners in the Great City Schools

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Introduction

Accurately and validly assessing what elementary and secondary school students know and can do is an enormously complex task. The complexity is magnified when the students are English language learners (ELLs).[1] This document attempts to clarify some of the issues surrounding the assessment of ELLs for school board members, administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and community members working in or served by the Great City Schools, which enroll over 30% of all English language learners in the nation.

This report is the result of numerous meetings of the bilingual education directors[2] of the Council of the Great City Schools and the organization's Task Force on Bilingual, Immigrant and Refugee Education. Both groups asked the Council to prepare a document that would provide members with guidance on the assessment of ELLs in both English language proficiency and academic performance. Specifically, this document—

- serves as a reference to the provisions of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* that pertain to the assessment of ELLs,
- provides profiles of available English language proficiency assessments,
- provides information on native language assessments and accommodations available for ELLs taking academic achievement tests in English, and
- summarizes current concerns about the validity and reliability of current ELL assessments.

[1] The term English language learner is synonymous in this document with the federally defined "limited English proficient" (LEP) student, which refers to an individual who has sufficient difficulties speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English.

[2] Here, bilingual education director refers to the senior administrative staff person within the district responsible for the education of ELLs.

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Framework

A central tenet of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* is that all students must be assessed on their attainment of high academic standards, first in reading and math, then in science. All layers of the educational system—states, districts, schools, and teachers—will be held accountable for what students know and can do using a new set of state-developed tests. For English language learners (ELLs), this means being assessed in how well they master English and how well they are doing in their content courses.

The new federal law makes clear that it wants students who have often been left behind because of their limited English proficiency to be full participants in and beneficiaries of our educational system. This means being held to the same standards as all other students, taught in the same content, and subject to the same assessments. The challenge for educators at this point involves how to accomplish these important goals and how to do so validly, accurately, and fairly. The task raises numerous and important issues that many educators are just beginning to face. Four of those issues, especially related to assessment, are summarized below.

- The National Research Council states, "The central dilemma regarding participation of English language learners in large scale assessment programs is that, when students are not proficient in the language of assessment (English), their scores on a test given in English will not accurately reflect their knowledge of the subject being assessed (except for a test that measures only English proficiency)" (p. 214, 1999).

- Each state defines English proficiency differently because there is no nationally-agreed upon standard. The lack of uniformity contributes to the confusion over how and when the performance of English language learners is assessed.

- Standardized achievement tests are often not normed or field tested on populations that include English language learners. Consequently, test results on ELLs and the cultural and linguistic variations they bring to the classroom are open to challenge.

- Research on the effects of assessment accommodations on the performance of ELLs is inconclusive.

Assessing English language learners validly and accurately remains an important goal despite these concerns. For this reason, the Council of the Great City Schools in consultation with member district bilingual education directors and experts in educating

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ELLs[3] created the following principles to guide educators on how and when ELLs should be assessed. These principles take into consideration the unique characteristics and needs of ELLs and caution against administering assessments or interpreting results without taking them into account. Furthermore, adherence to these principles will improve the assessment of all students within the educational system, including English language learners.

ELLs should be included in all district-wide assessments. Systemwide assessment of ELLs should:

- address their unique characteristics, such as extent of native language literacy and amount of prior formal schooling.
- measure language proficiency and academic achievement through multiple types of assessments, with different types of tasks and ways of scoring.
- be aligned with the same system of high academic standards, challenging curriculum, and quality instruction provided to all other students.
- utilize assessments that are designed for and, as appropriate, normed on students of similar linguistic backgrounds.
- inform instruction and provide clear, accurate, and comprehensible data to all stakeholders.
- provide language proficiency and academic achievement data, including trend data, disaggregated by English language proficiency.

This document is designed to be a practical guide for Great City School districts as they integrate ELLs into their assessment systems. The guide will use the above-listed principles as a starting point, and will provide references to *No Child Left Behind*, key research on assessing ELLs, and documents, websites, and resources that can be used to assess ELLs appropriately.

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[3]Experts include: Raj Balu, Chicago Public Schools, Richard Durán, University of California, Santa Barbara, Eugene Garcia, University of Arizona, Margo Gottlieb, Illinois Resource Center, Mary I. Ramirez, Philadelphia Public Schools, Darline P. Robles, Los Angeles County Office of Education, Lourdes Rovira, Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Language Proficiency Assessments

This chapter discusses available resources and requirements for testing the progress of ELLs in acquiring English language proficiency. The purposes of such assessments include:

1. identifying and placing ELLs in appropriate language instruction programs;
2. measuring progress toward full English language proficiency; and
3. administering funds and services at the federal, state, and local levels in a way that will provide the most appropriate language instruction programs to ELL students.

NCLB Provisions Pertaining to Language Proficiency

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* contains two specific references to the assessment of English language proficiency:

Title I
Each State plan shall demonstrate that local educational agencies in the State will, beginning not later than school year 2002-2003, provide for an annual assessment of English proficiency (measuring student's oral language, reading, and writing skills in English) of all students in the schools served by the State Education Agency (§1111 (b)(7))

Title III
A State shall approve evaluation measures...that are designed to assess the progress of children attaining English proficiency, including a child's level of comprehension, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English (§3121 (d)(1))

Assessing Comprehension

Title III of *No Child Left Behind* requires schools to assess the progress of ELLs towards English proficiency in comprehension, speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) has issued draft non-regulatory guidance indicating that 'comprehension' can be assessed and reported using the receptive domains of listening and reading. No additional assessments are required to determine comprehension, but school districts and states may need to evaluate their language proficiency instruments to ensure that the listening and reading sections are capable of assessing comprehension and can be reported as such. This guidance, available at http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library/policy/guidance.pdf, states:

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> For the measurement of reading comprehension, LEAs may report on a student's ability to read grade-level English proficiency texts with understanding and report on a student's ability to appropriately provide grade level demonstrations of that understanding. The measurement of listening comprehension includes both the student's ability to comprehend and respond in social interactions and the student's ability to perform in academics.

Profiles of Available Language Proficiency Assessments

There are a number of resources available to help school districts identify and evaluate various language proficiency measuring tools. A new study prepared for OELA in October 2002 showed that 51 State Departments of Education (SEAs) used some type of language proficiency test to identify and place ELL students. The table below summarizes the language proficiency tests used by most State Education Agencies (SEAs) and the number and percentage of SEAs using each one. (The reader should note that some SEAs use more than one assessment.)

Language proficiency test	# of SEAs	% of SEAs
Language Assessment Scales (LAS)	46	85%
IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IPT)	38	70%
Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey	28	52%
Language Assessment Battery (LAB)	13	24%
Basic Inventory of Natural Languages (BINL)	6	11%
Maculaitis Assessment (MAC)	6	11%
Secondary Level English Proficiency (SLEP)	6	11%
Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery	6	11%

Many states allow their local school districts to use more than one language proficiency test, often because some batteries do not assess all four required domains—reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

A recent survey by the Council of the Great City Schools showed that the nation's major urban school districts used a variety of assessments. The IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IPT) and the Language Assessment Scaled (LAS) were the most frequently used language proficiency tests in big city schools but many also used state and district-created assessments to measure language proficiency. The table on the next page lists the most common commercially-available assessments used in the Great City Schools and the characteristics of each. (All information was gathered from test publishers' websites.)

Assessments Commonly Used in Great City Schools						
Test Name	**Publisher**	**Domains Assessed**	**Grades/ Ages**	**What is Assessed**	**Approximate Time to Administer**	**Scoring**
IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IPT)	Ballard & Tighe www.ballard-tighe.com	reading, writing, speaking, listening	Prek-12	reading: vocabulary, vocabulary in context, reading for understanding, reading for life skills, and language usage. writing: ability to generate writing that reflects common usage and academic grade-level standards.	Varies with proficiency level; group administration available for reading & writing portions	Scoring time varies; software is available as are scan-able materials.
Language Assessment Scales (LAS)	CTB/ McGraw-Hill www.ctb.com	reading, writing, speaking, listening	reading/ writing: 2-12	vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension, mechanics and usage, writing	Group administration, either one 60-90 minute session or two 45 minute sessions	LASScore Computer software is available.
			speaking/ listening: Prek-12	Primary language subsystems: phonemic, lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic	Approximately 45 minutes per student	
Woodcock Muñoz Language Survey	Riverside Publishing www.riverpub.com	oral language, reading, writing, and broad English	4 yrs.- Adult	Oral: Picture Vocabulary measures the ability to name familiar and unfamiliar pictured objects that involve breadth and depth of school-related knowledge and experience. Verbal Analogies measures the ability to complete oral analogies requiring verbal comprehension and reasoning. Reading/writing:Letter-Word Identification measures the ability to read familiar and unfamiliar letters and words. Dictation measures the ability to respond in writing to questions, requiring knowledge of letter forms, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and word usage.	5 minutes per subtest (2 subtests for reading/writing, 2 subtests for listening/ speaking)	Scoring software is available.
Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery	Riverside Publishing www.riverpub.com	oral language, reading, writing	2-90+ yrs.	Oral: memory for sentences, picture vocabulary, oral vocabulary, listening comprehension, verbal analogies Reading: letter-word identification, passage comprehension, word attack, reading vocabulary Writing: dictation, writing samples, proofing, writing fluency, punctuation & capitalization, spelling, usage, handwriting	Generally 20-60 minutes	Scoring time varies; software is available.

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The Handbook of English Language Proficiency Tests (del Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995) (http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/miscpubs/eacwest/elptests.htm) also provides important information about English language proficiency assessments, including the following kinds of information:

- test publisher and contact information
- purpose of test
- intended age and language groups
- time required for administration
- cost
- items
- scoring information
- test design and theoretical foundation for test
- reliability and validity
- references for critiques of test
- test administration (individual vs. small group, visuals used, etc.)

This information is provided on five specific language proficiency assessment instruments:

1. Basic Inventory of Natural Languages (BILN)
2. Bilingual Syntax Measure
3. Idea Proficiency Test (IPT)
4. Language Assessment Scales (LAS)
5. Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey.

The handbook also includes a glossary of assessment-related terms, and is intended to facilitate informed test adoption.

A third source of information about available language proficiency assessments is the information brief: ***Which tests are commonly used to determine English and/or Spanish language proficiency?*** available from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition at http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/askncela/25tests.html

Potential Issues with Existing Language Proficiency Assessments

Title III of *No Child Left Behind Act* also requires the establishment of standards and objectives for raising the level of English proficiency in the four domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. These standards are to be aligned with (but not the same as) the standards for English language arts (§3113 (b)(2)).

These language proficiency objectives:

- Shall use consistent methods and measurements (§3122 (a)(2)(B)) and
- Shall include, at a minimum, annual increases in the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency by the end of each school year, as determined by a valid and reliable assessment of English proficiency (§3122 (a)(3)(A)(*ii*))

Assessing English Language Learners

The law suggests that language proficiency assessments should be correlated with state-created language proficiency standards and objectives. Current versions of the IPT, LAS, and other off-the-shelf language proficiency assessments were not explicitly created for, nor do they necessarily correlate with, any specific state's standards and objectives, however. Additional technical work is still needed that would determine the degree to which any of these or other tests align with a specific state's standards. Language proficiency assessments that are developed by a state or a commercial venture specifically for that state and its specific standards appear to meet the full requirements of *No Child Left Behind.*

Creating Assessments that Correlate with English Language Proficiency Standards

A number of states and school districts have developed their own English language proficiency instruments that can be used to assess their ELLs. This process is usually done in conjunction with a commercial test publisher.

The State of California, for example, recently partnered with a commercial test publisher to produce the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), a language proficiency assessment that is aligned to the state's English Language Development standards and assesses reading, writing, speaking and listening. The CELDT was administered for the second time during the 2002-2003 school year. The California Department of Education website has extensive information on the CELDT at: http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/celdt/index.html and a handbook available at: http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/celdt/resources/0417pressbr.pdf

The New York State Education Department, in collaboration with another testing company, has developed the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), an assessment instrument based on the New York State ESL learning standards. Teachers drafted the initial pool of test questions for the NYSESLAT, and the first administration of the assessment is scheduled for Spring 2003. Information is available at: http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/testing/nyseslat.html

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) facilitates a State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) on Assessing Limited English Proficient Students, a coalition of states working to develop and implement appropriate assessments for ELLs. Information is available at: http://www.ccsso.org/scass/p_lep/index.html

Additional Issues with Using Current Language Proficiency Assessments

Three concerns remain for educators working to assess the English language proficiency of their ELL students.

1. Language proficiency assessments such as the LAS and the IPT are designed to identify ELLs for special language instructional programs and to exit them from those programs. They are not necessarily intended to measure progress in the attainment of English language proficiency, which is what *No Child Left Behind*

requires. Districts need to be cautious in the use of these instruments to meet the requirements of the Act.

2. Many states and districts have been using tests designed to assess grade-level language arts skills, such as the Stanford 9, to assess the English language proficiency of English language learners. Language arts assessments are not valid and reliable assessments of English language proficiency.

3. Existing language proficiency measures focus, for the most part, on discrete, out-of-context language elements and not on the more communicative language needed for academic performance (Saville-Troike, 1991.) Educators need to be cautious about choosing instruments that assess the required domains.

Current Activities

Commercial test publishers are working with states and others so that their language proficiency assessments correlate with state language proficiency standards. These test publishers are also working to determine how their current instruments measure and demonstrate progress in language proficiency attainment over time. Ballard and Tighe, for example, publishers of the IPT, have posted guidelines on their website for measuring progress expected for each year of language proficiency instruction in each of the four domains assessed by their instruments.

Title VI, Section 6112 of *No Child Left Behind*, moreover, authorizes grants to develop and enhance assessment instruments for states or consortia of states. Five of the nine grants funded in fiscal year 2002 include the development and implementation of language proficiency assessments for ELLs. Information on the funded projects is available at: http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-2003/02122003a.html

Academic Achievement Assessments

This chapter discusses available resources and requirements for assessing the content knowledge of English language learners.

NCLB Provisions Pertaining to Assessing Academic Achievement

Titles I and III of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* contain specific references to the assessment of the content knowledge of English language learners:

Title I
Such (academic) assessments shall provide for--

The participation in such assessments of all students (§1111 (b)(3)(C)(ix)(I))

The inclusion of limited English proficient students, who shall be assessed in a valid and reliable manner and provided reasonable accommodations on assessments administered to such students...including, to the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic content areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency (§1111 (b) (3)(C)(ix)(III))

The academic assessment (using tests written in English) of reading or language arts of any student who has attended school in the United States...for three or more consecutive school years, except that if the local education agency determines, on a case-by-case individual basis, that academic assessments in another language or form would likely yield more accurate and reliable information on what such student knows and can do, the local education agency may make a determination to assess such student in the appropriate language other than English for a period that does not exceed two additional consecutive years, provided that such student has not yet reached a level of English language proficiency sufficient to yield valid and reliable information on what such student knows and can do on tests (written in English) of reading or language arts (§1111 (b) (3)(C)(x)).

Each State plan shall identify the languages other than English that are present in the participating student population and indicate the languages for which yearly student academic assessments are not available and are needed. The State shall make every effort to develop such assessments and may request assistance from the Secretary if linguistically accessible academic assessment measures are needed. Upon request, the Secretary shall assist with the identification of appropriate academic assessment measures in the needed languages, but shall not mandate a specific academic assessment or mode of instruction (§1111 (b)(6)).

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Title III
A State shall approve evaluation measures...that are designed to assess student attainment of challenging State student academic achievement standards (§3121 (d)(2)).

Assessments of Academic Achievement in the Native Language

The *No Child Left Behind Act* explicitly states that assessing the academic achievement of ELLs should be in a language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what these students know and can do in each academic content area. The National Research Council (NRC) cautions educators, however, on the difficulties that test developers have in developing native language assessments that are equivalent to their English versions:

> Such difficulties include problems of regional and dialectical differences, nonequivalence of vocabulary difficulty between two languages, problems of incomplete language development and lack of literacy development in students' primary languages, and the extreme difficulty of defining a "bilingual" equating sample (each new definition of bilingual sample requires statistical equivalence among groups) (p.43, 1998).

The NRC goes on to suggest that "translations should be done to determine equivalent meaning, and ideally, psychometric validation should be undertaken as well, such as validating the translated version with empirical evidence using item response theory." This is important to ensure that assessments in one's native language are comparable to assessments of the same subject matter in English. (p.43, 1998).

Additionally, Abedi, et al. (1998) have found that simply translating test items from English to a student's native language does not significantly improve the performance of ELLs if the native language is not the language of instruction.

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its bilingual education directors to determine what languages other than English state assessments of academic achievement were being offered. Of the 30 respondents, 20 directors said that their districts did not offer tests of academic achievement in a language other than English. Nine districts offered an academic achievement test in Spanish. These Spanish-language achievement tests were either direct translations of an English version of the test, or were assessments that paralleled the English versions (SABE, Aprenda, Logramos, Supera). One district indicated that its state had Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Russian and Chinese translations of state mathematics assessments for students given math instruction in those languages.

August & Hakuta (1997) caution, however, that such native language assessments that parallel their English counterparts in content are not necessarily appropriate for the vast majority of ELLs in the United States who are not receiving instruction in their native language. They suggest that native language assessments are more appropriate for ELLs who are better able to demonstrate content knowledge in their native language, such as those who are receiving all or a majority of their instruction in their native

language, or those who may currently receive English-only instruction but who have been recently educated in their home country.

An information brief, *Which tests are available that measure the yearly academic progress of English language learners?* is available from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition at http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/askncela/26ayptests.htm. It is one source of information on academic achievement tests suitable for English language learners. The reader should note, however, that this brief does not include information on commonly-used academic achievement tests, such as the Stanford 9, as these tests are normed on a native English-speaking population.

Accommodations to Academic Achievement Assessments

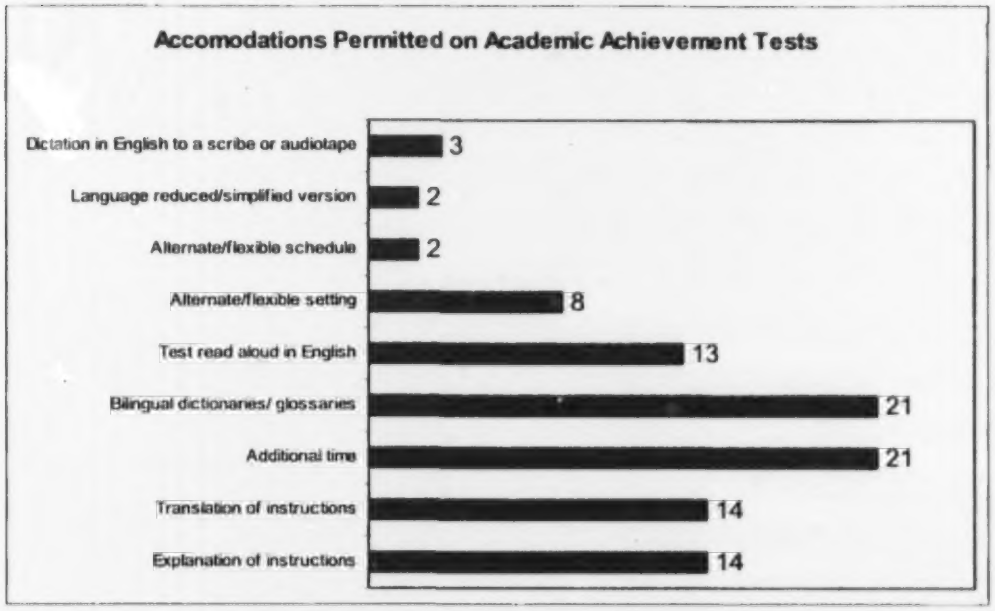
The complexities involved in assessing ELLs are multiplied when considering the use of accommodations. Accommodations usually entail modifying the test or the testing procedure to give ELLs better access to the content of the English exam (Butler & Stevens, 1997). This is done to make English language proficiency less of a factor in test performance when measuring the content knowledge of ELLs. Ideally, accommodations should have no effect on the performance of native English-speaking students (Abedi, 2001).

Butler and Stevens (1997) delineate two kinds of accommodations for ELLs and the specific strategies imbedded in each.

Two Categories of Accommodations for English Language Learners	
Modification of the test	**Modification of the test procedure**
• Assessment in the native language • Modification of linguistic complexity • Addition of visual supports • Use of glossaries in the native language • Use of glossaries in English • Linguistic modification of test directions • Additional example items/tasks	• Extra assessment time • Breaks during test • Administration in several sessions • Oral directions in the native language • Small-group administration • Separate room administration • Use of dictionaries • Reading aloud of questions in English • Answers written directly in test booklet • Directions read aloud or explained

A recent survey of Great City School districts (33 districts reporting) found that a variety of accommodations were used with ELLs taking state-mandated academic achievement tests in English. The most commonly-used accommodation involved

additional test-taking time and the use of bilingual dictionaries. (Many districts permit more than one accommodation.)



Many of the accommodations used with ELLs, however, were developed with special education students in mind (e.g., breaks during testing, extended time to answer questions, and separate room accommodations) and were designed to assist students who have difficulty performing tasks for prolonged periods of time. Some of these accommodations do not necessarily address the linguistic needs of ELLs, however, nor do they necessarily reflect the process of second language acquisition (Holmes & Durón, 2000). The benefits or liabilities of these accommodations for ELLs are largely unknown or negligible.

Research has demonstrated that many accommodations, individually or in combination, do not have the intended effect of reducing the impact of language on the demonstration of knowledge. One study, for example, showed that providing extra time to take the test resulted in substantially higher scores for both ELLs and non-ELLs, as did providing a glossary and extra time. Providing a glossary without extra time did not increase test performance, however. In fact, the only accommodations that narrowed the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs involved simplifying test questions with excessive linguistic demand (Abedi, et al., 2000).

Much research is still needed on the effect of specific accommodations on ELL test performance. Addition work is also needed to see if accommodations other than those designed for students with disabilities would work better with ELLs. In the meantime, school districts, states and/or test developers could modify test questions to reduce unnecessary language complexity in their assessments. School districts should also be

wary of simply translating tests or test items orally or in writing into students' native languages. This strategy has not proven to be successful with ELLs, since research is clear that the language of the test should match the primary language of instruction.

At this time, it is unclear whether translating—orally or in writing—a test written in English into a student's native language is any more helpful to an ELLs' test performance than administering it to them in English. The high stakes nature of *No Child Left Behind* for schools and school districts, however, suggests that these questions should be given immediate attention by educators, researchers, and policymakers.

Recommendations

All stakeholders in the nation's educational system—test developers, school board members, teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers, students, parents, and state and local education agencies—have a responsibility to instruct and assess English language learners appropriately. The following are recommendations for each group.

Test Developers

States, districts, and test publishers are encouraged to align their assessment systems with the principles presented at the beginning of this document, as well as with individual state language proficiency standards.

Test developers should also design native language assessments of academic achievement that align with the states' English-language academic achievement tests.

English language proficiency assessments are needed that meet the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, specifically, assessments that measure and track progress in language proficiency.

Teachers

Teachers and all school personnel responsible for instruction of ELLs should know and teach to the academic and language proficiency standards set by their district or state. Instructors should appropriately assess ELLs' language proficiency and academic achievement, both formally and informally, and the results of each assessment should inform classroom instruction.

Teachers, and those responsible for the professional development of teachers, should teach test-taking skills and procedures to all students, including ELLs.

Teachers should be well versed on the academic needs of ELLs even if they are not bilingual instructors.

Researchers

Researchers need to answer the fundamental question underlying the entire debate over the instruction and assessment of ELLs: When is it appropriate to test ELLs in English?

Much research is also needed on the effects of accommodations on the academic test performance of ELLs. Research is needed, moreover, on the effects of academic achievement assessments administered in an ELLs' native languages on a student's test scores.

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Assessing English Language Learners

Language researchers should investigate and report on the relationship between second language acquisition and language and content knowledge assessment results.

Policymakers

Policymakers need to provide more guidance on how to measure progress in language acquisition and provide greater resources to develop appropriate assessments if they are not currently available. School districts are investing significant time and money in commercially-available assessments and professional development without really knowing whether the assessments are the right ones.

Policymakers should provide greater oversight on the use of federal funds for such inappropriate assessments as IQ tests to determine English language proficiency.

Policymakers, furthermore, can fund more research on the benefits of various accommodations and more work on developing academic achievement assessments in languages other than English.

Policymakers, moreover, need to address the needs of students with limited formal education—those students, often in middle or high school—who have immigrated to the United States with little or no prior formal education. Policymakers and educators need to figure out the fairest ways to include these students in our budding system of standards, instruction and assessment.

Finally, policymakers need to devote considerably more research dollars to determining the most effective and efficient instructional strategies for ensuring all ELLs attain English proficiency.

State Education Agencies

State Education Agencies are responsible under *No Child Left Behind* for ensuring that ELLs are assessed in a valid and reliable manner and in a language and form most likely to yield accurate data. The law is very clear that states can no longer exempt ELLs from state assessment systems because they do not have an appropriate assessment for this group. While it may not be feasible to find or create an academic achievement assessment for every language group, it certainly is important to do so for the most common ones. States need to begin immediately developing these native language assessments.

Local Education Agencies

Local education agencies (LEAs) need to provide appropriate language instruction for all students, including ELLs, aligned to state standards and assessments.

Additionally, LEAs need to provide a range of instructional programs—programs that incorporate students' native languages, programs that provide sheltered content

instruction, and programs that provide direct English language instruction—and to understand the research surrounding each strategy.

LEAs, moreover, need to better prioritize the development and purchase of high quality materials to strengthen English language development. These priorities should be matched to high quality professional development (for all teachers) on the use of materials and on effective instructional practices.

Finally, LEAs must take a serious look at their student academic performance data disaggregated by subgroups, including ELLs, and use this data to reflect on and inform what is and is not working for this student population and why.

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Appendix A: About the Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 60 of the nation's largest urban school systems. Its Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization in between board meetings. The mission of the Council is to advocate for and assist in the improvement of public education in the nation's major cities. To meet that mission, the Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, teacher recruitment, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year on promising practices in urban education; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior managers in each city with responsibility in such areas as federal programs, operations and finance, personnel, communications, research, technology, and others. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

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